

MUSIC CITY FREE TEXAS

#82 JUNE 1996

LIBBI BOSWORTH



**HONEST JOHN • BIRTHS & DEATHS
REVIEWS**

*Libbi Bosworth • Bobby Fuller
Erik Hokkanen • Lone Star
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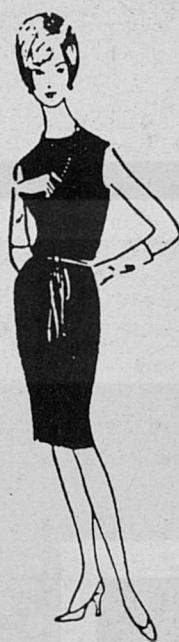
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THEIR BOOM, OUR BUST

Periodically, some damn fool national magazine does a feature on the best places to live in America, and every time there's a predictable local media hoopla about Austin rising, or is it sinking?, guess it depends on your point of view, in the ratings. Image aside, the reality is an ungodly number of new Republicans, very few of whom seem to have any interest in live music, least I don't notice the crowds getting any bigger, moving into the Austin area every day, making it, among other things, the most expensive place in Texas to buy or rent property. What I'd like to see is someone rate American cities as places for musicians (and, come to think, music magazine publishers) to live, using specific parameters like number of clubs, average gig money, sideperson pool and union strength alongside the usual considerations, basically balancing earning potential against cost of living and amenities.

Whether or not such a study can really be done on an even halfway scientific basis, experience, commonsense and pure instinct all cry out, scream out, the same thing—Austin'd be a long way from the top. Nowhere in Texas would do too good, thanks to the rotten right to work laws that sideline the musicians union, but even in Texas, Austin would be well below San Antonio and maybe even Dallas and Houston (though who wants to live in Dallas or Houston?). It's long been true that Austin bands hustle for gigs in those cities, but their bands can't afford to play in Austin.

The other day, the *Statesman* did a piece on Central Texas incomes which included Dale Watson. Now here's an enormously talented guy who works his butt off, has a couple of albums out, gets extra money from publishing rights and still only makes \$12,000 a year (by way of comparison, a bartender at Cedar Street makes \$40,000). Mrs Honest John, as Damon Runyon would say, was horrified—and she's a schoolteacher, one of the most notoriously underpaid professions in the area. I, on the other hand, was pleasantly surprised to hear he was making that much and a awful lot of Austin musicians must envy him such relative wealth.

When you consider that Lucinda Williams, who, it's safe to say, is doing rather better than Watson, was thinking of moving back here, but couldn't find anywhere to live in her price range and decided to stay in affordable Nashville, you have to wonder how long it'll take the friction between Austin's musical mystique and its economic reality to abrade away the claim to be the Live Music Capital of the World. Already, there's a quiet but steady exodus of musicians to places like Dripping Springs—I gather the rule is you leave South Austin when your property taxes get to be more than your mortgage—but when the hallmark of a successful Austin band is that it rarely plays in Austin, radical relocation has to be an increasingly attractive option.

Still, there is one ray of hope. Woody Roberts of Threadgill's, veteran of many booms and busts, thinks Austin's headed for another downturn. He figures that when the computer companies' tax incentives run out, they'll shop around for another growth-crazed city and move on, like they did from Boston. Of course, that means a lot of money will leave town, but musicians aren't getting much of it anyway, so what's the difference? At least they'll be able to find somewhere to live.

JC

LIBBI BOSWORTH

First off, there was a girl from Galveston called Libbi Bosworth who wound up, by circuitous routes, in Los Angeles where she met a guitarist called Bill Dwyer. Together they moved to Austin and she started making a name for herself in the clubs. Then she broke one of the cardinal rules of show biz by changing that name, not just legally but professionally, when she and Bill got married. One small side effect was that a lot of people voted Libbi Bosworth #1 Female Vocalist/Country in the 1992 MCT Poll, and were a little confused when it went to someone they'd never heard of called Libbi Dwyer. Shortly after, the Dwyers took off for Nashville to seek fame and fortune but a couple of years later Libbi Bosworth was featured on both the *Austin Country Nights* and *True Sounds Of The New West* compilations, from which one inferred that the ship of matrimony had foundered on the rocks of discord. Last October, Bosworth herself returned to Austin, from which one inferred that the City of Broken Dreams had once again lived up to its name.

Though her name hasn't been heard much since she got back—between getting divorced, three moves and recurring health problems, "It's been a rough few months," she's had to cancel more gigs than she's played, and there have only been three of them—Bosworth's far from slinking back with her tail between her legs. Like a sigh of relief personified, she radiates delight at having put Nashville behind her and being back home—"I'm never leaving Texas again! Everything is better here, the life, the food, everything!"

As an object lesson, Bosworth is a bit of a washout. "I'm not interested in slamming Nashville, I don't want to give it the significance. It's not so much I hate the place, it's just wasn't for me, it wasn't what I wanted to do and I didn't like what they were doing. I certainly didn't take advantage of all it had to offer, but you have to be there 10-12 years to get anywhere and I just didn't want to be there for 10-12 years. It's all about quantity, not quality, up there and playing a gig was *not* fun which made me wonder, well, why do it?" Symptomatic of the new reality in Nashville, at 30 odd, she admits "I felt like an old lady, watching those cute young girls singing the covers I used to play." Bosworth's problem, or salvation, depending how you look at it, was hunger, or rather lack of it. "There was a time when I thought I wanted to be *somebody*, play arenas, you know, but now I'm not sure I ever really wanted to be famous. For me, the reward for playing music is playing music—anything and everything else is icing on the cake."

Bosworth was virtually weaned on country. "Mom worked at a country radio station in Dallas and Dad was a major honky-tonker, he *lived* country music, a very colorful character. When my parents got divorced, he used to take me around with him—I know a *lot* of beer joints in Houston! Even then I had this incredible urge to sing those sad songs, there was something really beautiful about them, like the blues. I grew up with so much of that, it was the only thing I knew, and I always wanted to sing." However, at 16, thrown out of her Galveston high school, Bosworth left home and tried to put both Texas and country music behind her, with stages as a punk and a jazz student at Berklee. Eventually though, her travels, and maybe destiny ("I'm good at this one thing"), led her back to country, as vocalist for Tumblin' Dice, which also included Bill Dwyer and Roy Heinrich, singing at "a hellhole in Culver City," and finally back to Texas for good. Now her goals are "maybe not quite as profound as you'd like. To play country music and have a blast doing it. *Nobody* can stop me singing in bars! I don't want to do whatever it takes to be successful. I'd rather be happy. Music is the most important thing in my life, but if I don't do it for a while, it doesn't go away."

For now, Nashville's loss is Austin's gain. With her life more or less sorted out and a debut album ("I'm a late bloomer") to promote, Bosworth still has plenty of time to reclaim that #1 Female Vocalist/Country slot, and under her own name this time.

JC

LIBBI BOSWORTH OUTSKIRTS OF YOU

(Freedom, CD, FR1010)

While a developing national network has revealed, partly, of course, by its very existence, that Real/Alternative/Insurgent/call it what you will Country is flourishing the length and breadth of these here United States, and beyond, it's also revealed a chronic shortage of female singers in the field, and that's just talking quantity, not quality. Not to disparage the half dozen or so Austin women who can loosely be defined as country singers, Austin has not been immune from this phenomenon, far from it. A couple of years ago there was just one hard-core female honky tonk singer in town, one, moreover, who many people, myself included, thought was also our best female country singer of any kind, and she left. Well, she's back, which is cool, and, finally, has an album out. Started in Nashville, with Bosworth's ex, Bill Dwyer, playing lead guitar on just over half the 11 tracks, and finished in Austin, it features such fine players as Casper Rawls, Paul Skelton, Lorne Rall, Matt Eskey, Lisa Pankratz, Erik Hokkanen, Gary Primich and, singing harmonies on Bosworth's "Greatest Hit," *Don't Call Me Crazy*, Gurf Morlix and, by pure happenstance, the Canadian band Prairie Oyster. However, the album's discontinuity—it's hard to find two tracks with the same lineup—works against Bosworth's natural strengths. An effervescent, energetic live performer, she routinely inspires musicians to excel themselves (check this action at The Broken Spoke on the 19th), but the chopping and changing of personnel and studios make it impossible for her to get any momentum going, and may explain why she never seems to be singing quite at her best. Having said that, however, taken individually, each song, eight written or co-written by Bosworth, notably the autobiographical *My Old Man*, accompanied only by Casper Rawls on acoustic guitar, sounds just fine. I guess I hoped for more of the dynamism of her live shows, but even at less than perfect, Bosworth is better value than most people on their best day, and hell, let's face it, if you want something new that's any good at all by a woman country singer who isn't a Nashville bimbo (and if that's sexist, tough luck, bimbo is as bimbo does), you haven't got a whole lot of choice.

JC

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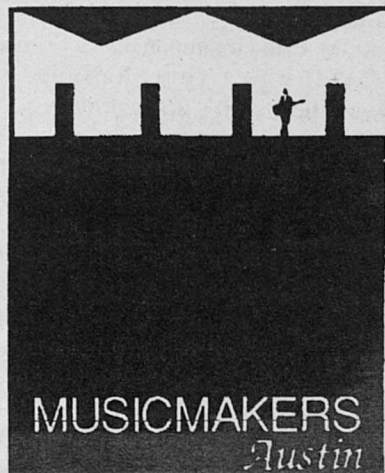
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HONEST JOHN'S SMOKING SECTION

First order of business is an unqualified apology to **Garry Tallent**, who I mistakenly identified as producer of **Will T Massey's** MCA album. I could have sworn it was he who assembled that particular bomb, but I guess it was guilt by association because the culprit was actually another former E Street Band member, **Roy Bittan**. Tom Clifford, who gave Tallent a glowing personal and musical reference, Peter Blackstock and Massey himself promptly jumped on my shit about this blunder, for which my sincere thanks, but I notice that all of them were concerned only with deflecting unwarranted blame away from Tallent, not even Will T wasting any time on Bittan's defence. Anyway, sorry, Mr Tallent, and more power to your producing arm.

Michael Corcoran courteously warned me in advance that the **Milton Brown** feature I wrote for the *Austin American-Statesman's* 'Heroes Of Texas Music' series was going to get worked over, but if I have to accept that my structures are, as I'm told, too complex for *Statesman* readers, so sentences and paragraphs had to be cut up into mental fingerfood, even Corky seemed a bit shocked by the brutalization of the first few paras. Still, two regular *Statesman* and *Chronicle* music writers told me I'd got off lightly and that much worse things routinely happen to their stuff. For better or worse, anything that appears in **MCT** is my responsibility, warts, errors, typos and all, but when you write for someone else, the copy you give them and what actually appears under your name often bear only a coincidental resemblance, the moral being that you shouldn't get mad at the writer, it may not be what he or she intended. Unhappy with what the *Chronicle* did to his Walter Hyatt tribute, **Larry Monroe** recently faxed round FYI copies of his original version, but being as I've got my very own mag, I can indulge myself in a luxury most journalists would love to have, pissing and moaning in print.

During June, I came across two wonderfully contrasting views of recording budgets. A while ago, there was talk of **Ray Wylie Hubbard** making a live album at Sons Of Hermann Hall in Dallas, but when I asked Steve Wilkison of Dejadisc what was happening with this, I discovered that, at best, the project is on hold as some music biz weasel has gotten to Hubbard and persuaded him you need at least \$35,000 to make an album. Wilkison is trying to persuade Hubbard of an obvious truth, that 312 times more money doesn't mean that he'll make an album 312 times better than **Loco Gringo's Lament**. I certainly intend to back him up on this, and, while I love Ray Wylie like a brother, another obvious truth is that he'd be doing incredibly well just to recoup that kind of outlay, let alone make anything for himself. At the other end of the scale, I was told a great story about **Santiago Jimenez Jr.**, which I deliberately haven't checked with either party so they can maintain deniability. Seems when Mark Rubin told him that Watermelon was giving them \$5,000, Jimenez's reaction was "Great. We'll make the album for \$500 and split the rest."

Thanks to my esteem for Sam Gentry of the Central Texas Accordion Association, I've gotten sucked into being on the **Austin-Adelaide Sister City Committee**, but while Sam and I are dreaming (le mot juste, I think) of Jimmie Dale Gilmore, Don Walser and/or Ponty Bone getting sent to Australia as cultural ambassadors, my confidence in the city's commitment to music, a fragile thing at best, was severely shaken when I heard that, during a recent visit by a delegation from Adelaide, Austin music was represented by a band called *Memphis Train*. Duh.

If you've been to West Texas, you'll understand why they feel so strongly about personal transportation. Jo Carol Pierce once told me that when she was a teen in Wellington, her beaux would

routinely rack up 300+ miles per date. Anyway, two tales of West Texans and their automobiles. Two years, eight months ago, **Butch Hancock** had his then newish Cherokee impounded by the Mexican police, either because he let a Mexican national drive it or, Butch's theory, because it's blue. Federales stereotypes are a little confounded by the fact that, many court appearances later, Butch has finally had his Jeep returned to him, on the other hand, they're rather confirmed by an extra 25,000 miles on the clock, but he figures, on balance, it was better to have someone using it than having it sit idle for that long.

The other story is fraught with irony — **Eddie Wilson** has **Jimmie Dale Gilmore** towed! Gilmore was debuting his new album on Kevin Connor's *Lone Star State Of Mind* and parked his van in the lot next to KGSR's building. When he came out, it was gone. The lot in question belongs to the soon to open (they're shooting for Labor Day) **Threadgill's World Headquarters**, prop E Wilson, and the guard who called the tow truck told Jimmie his instructions came from the very top. Eddie denies culpability, but the Gilmores, who, major label deal or no, have better uses for \$80, are giving him a ration of shit about it. One of the ironies is that Wilson and Gilmore were driving past the self same spot together when Wilson first had the idea of transforming the old National Guard armory into the Armadillo World Headquarters.

The legend as I knew it was that **Elvis Presley** played close by, Dessau Hall and The Skyliner, but never in Austin proper. However, **Eddie Wilson** has been given a poster for an August, 1955 Elvis show at the Sportscenter, 501 Barton Springs. Along with the poster came a story about the promoter looking for Elvis after the show and finding him wrapped in a stage curtain, a strip of elastic all that was left of his clothes. Boxers or briefs? There's a now middle-aged Austin woman somewhere who knows for sure.

I don't think anyone would ever describe it as "much-loved," however it's been a familiar landmark on the Austin country scene for lo these many years, but will now be seen no more. Though he swears he bought it new, **Lee Nichols'** hat was beat to shit when he and I used to hang out at Henry's six, seven years ago and went steadily downhill from there, earning Nichols almost as much right as Don Walser to be called 'The Anti-Garth.' Anyway, the steel wire finally sprang in a terminal way, forcing its retirement from active duty, a loss his ladyfriend is bearing with stoic fortitude. As Lee has rarely, if ever, been seen in public without it, I feel it only right to report my discovery that, unlike many habitual hat wearers, he does in fact have a full head of hair.


So, this drummer, really sick of drummer jokes, decides to diversify. He takes a look round a music store and says "I'd like that red saxophone and the blue accordion." The music store guy says, "Sorry, I can't sell you those." The drummer asks "Why not?" and the guy says "Well, I need the fire extinguisher and the radiator's bolted to the wall."

DJ OF THE MONTH

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JULY BIRTHS & DEATHS

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|------|--|
| 1st | Bobby Day • 1932 • Fort Worth |
| | Marc Benno • 1947 • Dallas |
| 2nd | Charlie Phillips • 1938 • Farwell |
| | Doug Smith • 1963 • Fort Stockton |
| | Cleanhead Vinson † 1988 |
| 3rd | Johnny Lee • 1945 • Texas City |
| | Betty Buckley • 1947 • Big Spring |
| | Carla Olson • 19?? • Austin |
| | Hersal Thomas † 1926 |
| 4th | Bob Shelton • 1909 • Hopkins County |
| | Fred 'Papa' Calhoun † 1987 |
| 5th | Snuff Garrett • 1938 • Dallas |
| | Teisco Del Ray • 1953 • California |
| | Harry James † 1983 |
| 6th | Shelly Lee Alley • 1894 • Alleyton |
| | Michael Ballew • 1944 • New Mexico |
| 7th | Barb Donovan • 1958 • Michigan |
| 8th | Link Davis Sr • 19?? • Van Zandt County |
| 9th | Eddie Dean • 1907 • Posey |
| | Joe B Mauldin • 1938 • Lubbock |
| 10th | Hociel Thomas • 1904 • Houston |
| 11th | Blind Lemon Jefferson |
| | • 1897 • Couchman |
| | Susanna Sharpe • 1961 • New York |
| | Tom Clifford • 1963 • DC |
| 12th | Butch Hancock • 1945 • Lubbock |
| | Bill Oliver • 1948 • Missouri |
| | Jimmy LaFave • 1955 • Wills Point |
| | Evan Johns • 1956 • DC |
| 13th | Andrew Cormier • 1936 • Louisiana |
| | Louise Mandrell • 1954 • Corpus Christi |
| 14th | Woody Guthrie • 1912 • Oklahoma |
| | Beth Galiger • 1960 • Missouri |
| 15th | Roky Erickson • 1947 • Austin |
| | Steve James • 1950 • New York |
| | Jeff Hughes • 1964 • Dallas |
| 16th | Teddy Buckner • 1901 • Sherman |
| | Nanci Griffith • 1953 • Seguin |
| | Julie Burrell • 1963 • Houston |
| 17th | Tex Curtis • 1927 • Galveston |
| | Harry Choates † 1951 |
| 18th | Bobby Fuller † 1966 |
| 19th | Charlie Teagarden • 1913 • Vernon |
| | Bobby Bradford • 1934 • Mississippi |
| | Buster Benton • 1935 • Texarkana |
| | Vikki Carr • 1940 • El Paso |
| | Carmen Bradford • 1960 • Austin |
| | Lefty Frizzell † 1975 |
| 20th | Jo Carol Pierce • 1944 • Wellington |
| | Henry Rivas • 1957 • San Antonio |
| | Radney Foster • 1959 • Del Rio |
| 21st | David Heath • 1949 • Oklahoma |
| | Darcie Deaville • 1962 • Canada |
| 22nd | Don Henley • 1947 • Gilmer |
| 23rd | Keith Ferguson • 1946 • Houston |
| | Laurie Freelo • 1956 • Virginia |
| 25th | Guitar Slim Green • 1907 • Bryan |
| | Tommy Duncan † 1967 |
| | Big Mama Thornton † 1984 |
| 26th | Dobie Gray • 1943 • Brookshire |
| 28th | Pat Mears • 1952 • DC |
| | Floyd Domino • 1952 • California |
| 29th | Charlie Christian • 1916 • Bonham |
| | Ed Miller • 1945 • Scotland |
| | Oscar Fox † 1961 |
| 30th | Sonny West • 1937 • Lubbock County |
| | RC Banks • 1950 • Lubbock |
| | Pipo Hernandez • 1950 • Canary Islands |
| 31st | Roy Heinrich • 1953 • Houston |
| | Randy Glines • 1958 • Wisconsin |
| | Jim Reeves † 1964 |
| | Teddy Wilson † 1986 |



WATERLOO

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 6th Texas Serenade
 11th Tina Marsh & CO2
 12th Kimberly M'Carver
 13th Toni Price
 19th Poor Yorick
 20th Betty Elders
 27th Maryann Price
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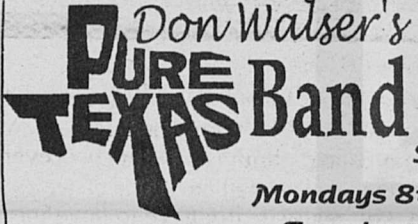
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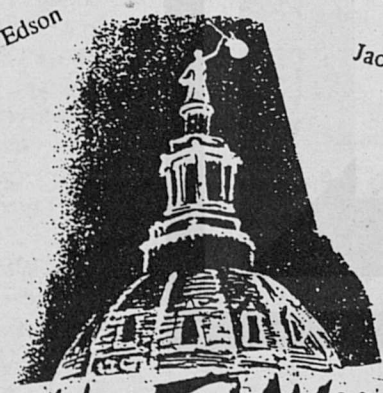


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THE BOBBY FULLER FOUR KRLA KING OF THE WHEELS/I FOUGHT THE LAW

(Del-Fi, CD, 70174-2)

The great musical irony of the 60s is that if you ask Americans, of a certain age at least, about their influences, you can lay money the Beatles will get mentioned, whereas if you ask Britons (who weren't prepubescent girls back then), they'll skip the middlemen and talk about the very same people The Beatles synthesized—all of them American. From the other side of the Atlantic, watching Americans eat up a diluted, ersatz version of their own music, the British Invasion was simply mystifying. OK, Buddy Holly and Eddie Cochran were dead, Chuck Berry was in jail, Jerry Lee Lewis in disgrace, things were a bit of shambles, but for God's sake you still had Bobby Fuller, so why piss about with Herman's Hermits, Freddie & The Dreamers or even the milquetoast Beatles? Fuller himself hit the nail on the head when he remarked, "Texas rock & roll... it's nothing new. We've been playing it for years. It's the same thing The Beatles have been trying to play but can't." That Fuller, born in Goose Creek and raised in El Paso, is now pretty much forgotten is due not so much to the British Invasion, which he despised, as to his murder in LA 30 years ago this month, when he was only 23. Two more CDs from the same, long dormant, label whose subsidiaries put out his epochal singles and albums, *The Texas Tapes* (all the recordings he made in El Paso) and the live *Celebrity Night At PJ's*, are due later this year, with a tribute album also in the works, but for now the anniversary is marked by a 24 track album that adds seven bonus tracks to Fuller's overlapping Mustang LPs. The highlight is, of course, the much imitated, never equalled rock & roll classic *I Fought The Law*, on which you can clearly hear Fuller sing "I miss my baby and a good fuck" (on his first version, a local hit in El Paso, he used Sonny Curtis' original jd lyric, "Robbing people with a zip gun," later amended to "six gun"), but he was far from being a one hit wonder. The opening instrumentals are impressive enough, but Fuller really kicked in with *Let Her Dance*, of which Miriam Linna (*Kicks*) says "This was the Bobby Fuller Four sound, entirely unreliant on the stifling British Invasion, pure and fresh and gorgeous and joyous," a sound which peaks on such knockouts as *Julie*, *Only When I Dream*, *Another Sad And Lonely Night*, *Never To Be Forgotten* and a killer version of Buddy Holly's *Love's Made A Fool Of You*. Thirty years later, this stuff still sounds terrific. I dunno, maybe if he'd taken a leaf out of Doug Sahm's book and passed the Bobby Fuller Four off as The Sir Robert Quartet...

JC

HERB STEINER TEXAS BANDSTAND FAVORITES

(Norris Family Music, cassette)

By day, Steiner's the classified ad manager for the *Chronicle*, by night a highly regarded steel guitar player, recently voted Player of the Year by the Texas Steel Guitar Association. With typical modesty, he claims this really means "Best steel player you can get on short notice," as, limited by professional and family responsibilities, he mostly plays local pickup gigs, with people like Johnny Bush, The Derailers and Roy Heinrich. As he's the first to acknowledge, Steiner doesn't belong to the manic Bob Dunn/Wayne Gailey/Lloyd Maines school of hot steel guitar playing, best exemplified locally by Scott Wall, but to a cooler, rocksteady dancehall tradition and he's teamed up with members, notably Johnny Case on piano, of the Dallas-based Time-Warp Top Hands, arguably the best, certainly the purest, Western Swing band in Texas, to make an album of dancehall length, ie extended longer than is usual on record, instrumentals. A mix of mostly familiar country, jazz and Tin Pan Alley standards, such as *All Of Me*, *When I Fall In Love*, *Westphalia Waltz*, *Take The 'A' Train*, *Panhandle Rag* and *Deep Water*, the ten tracks are, and I mean this in the nicest possible way, very superior Texas wallpaper. Where New Age, which is supposed to be soothing, just irritates me, Steiner & Co's skilful, low-key noodling is immensely restful, not what I usually look for in music, but I'll gladly take it.

JC

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RECORD REVIEWS

ERIK HOKKANEN & THE SNOW WOLVES SWING THE NIGHT AWAY

(independent cassette)

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome on violin, mandolin, guitars and vocals, Mr Erik Hokkanen, wailing away on clarinet it's Stan 'Cool Pops' Smith, on trombone Freddie Mendoza, on saxophones Elias Haslanger, on trumpet and electric guitar the nonidentical twins Phil and Slim Richey, gut-string guitar Joey De Lago, tenor banjo Mark Rubin, string bass Jeff Haley, drums Chris Searles, vocalizing the lovely she-wolves Beckah Ross, Charlene Hancock and Rachel Rhodes, on accordion General Charles De Gaulle—OK, I just put that in to see if there were any Bonzo Dog fans out there. At one point, I felt a bit smug about figuring out most of this lineup without looking at the credits, but it really isn't too impressive a trick as most of them are utterly unmistakable. More than a swing showcase for Hokkanen, who wrote all 15 numbers, this is an opportunity to hear some of the absolutely best musicians in Austin not just sprinkling fairydust as guest performers but transcending themselves in the company of their peers. The only caveat is that Hokkanen's voice, though far from unendurable, is not exactly his strongest suit, so the most memorable tracks are those sung by Ross (*It's Springtime*), Hancock (*It's All A Dream*) and, outstandingly, Rhodes (*Silent Reverie*) plus the instrumental *Zobo's Breakdown* and *Bedtime Story*. Hokkanen's problem is that the comparatively minor flaw of his limited vocal range stands out rather starkly against the magnificent backdrop provided by The Snow Wolves. In a properly organized world, an album of this quality would be on CD and most of the CDs I get would, if released at all, be on cassette.

JC

(Erik Hokkanen, 39 Chalmers, Austin, TX 78702)

EVA YBARRA Y SU CONJUNTO ROMANCE INOLVIDABLE

(Rounder, CD, 6062)

Standing at the head of the line for the title of Best Conjunto Album of 1996 is the kind of wrap-up summary that ought to come at the end of a review, but Ybarra's second Rounder album is so immediately impressive, and gets even more so with repeated playings, that I figure I might as well cut to the chase and say that if you have any taste for conjunto, you really, really have to have this. The only woman who's managed to fight her way into the front ranks of conjunto both as an accordionist and band leader (a measure of the genre's machismo level is that she once had an entire band quit on her because they were tired of taking shit from their friends about working for a woman), with this album Ybarra has moved to a new level, establishing herself as a grandmaster on a par with Jordan, Saldivar or los hermanos Jimenez. It's hard to improve on, let alone quarrel with, Cathy Ragland, once again Ybarra's producer, who remarks in the liner notes, "her bright tones, dynamic range and rich, florid chromatic runs bring a level of grace and sophistication never before heard in polka-driven conjunto music." A common weakness in conjunto albums is the vocals, most accordionists singing about as well as most blues guitarists, and while Ybarra can carry a tune, she strengthens her hand considerably by leaving the bulk of the them to Gloria Garcia, who also wrote three of the songs on an album made up, unusually, of all original material and, even more unusually, all but one of the 10 songs were written by women. Garcia contributed a ranchera, a balada, and a corrido con banda, *Tuxtla*, replete with trumpets, trombone, tuba, clarinet, keyboards and flute, Ybarra a huapango (*A Mi Querido Austin*), a bilingual balada and a cumbia plus two instrumentals, a polka and the title track bolero-tango, Maria Ybarra the country *Nos Has De Poder*, with pedal steel, Lily Ybarra Gonzales another cumbia and ranchera, and Guadalupe Betancourt a third ranchera, making a lavishly diverse background for Ybarra's wonderful playing. Of course, it's only July, but anyone who wants to top this has their work cut out for them. Superb.

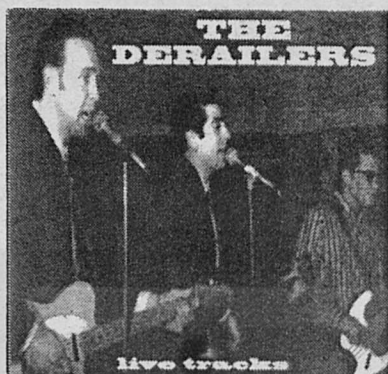
JC

LONE STAR

(Daring, CD, 3023)

Going by the soundtrack, my guess is that John Sayles' South Texas movie gets off to a great start, blasts along with the occasional hiccup, but runs out of steam and drags towards the end. Opening with Conjunto Bernal's *Mi Unico Camino*, the other variegated highspots are Little Walter's *Boogie*, Little Willie John's *You Hurt Me* and *My Love Is*, Lucinda Williams' *The Night's Too Long*, Ivory Joe Hunter's *Since I Met You Baby*, reprised in Spanish as *Desde Que Conosco* by Freddie Fender, Isidro (sic, not 'Isidoro' as the credits have it) Lopez's *Sabor A Mi*, Lydia Mendoza's *Jurame* and Patsy Montana's *I Want To Be A Cowboy's Sweetheart*, however songs by Carmen y Laura, Big Joe Turner and Chelo Silva were dropped in favor of four sterile and superfluous film score throwaways. An amazing amount of great music, most of it Texas music, for a film, but not quite enough for an album.

JC



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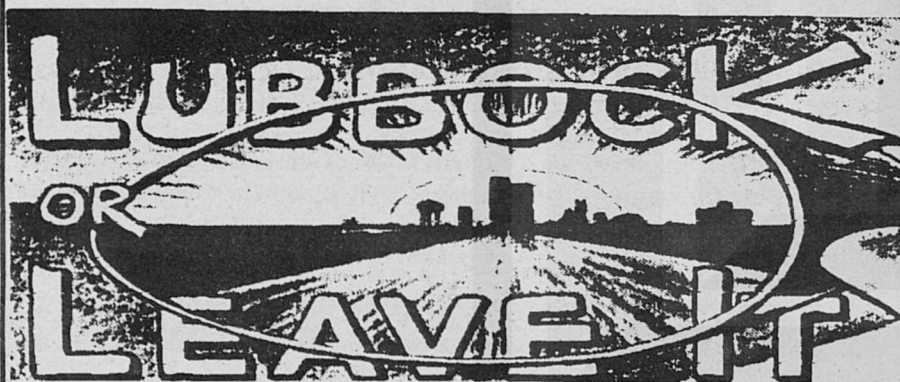
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